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RESIDENT *VERSUS* VISITANT

By WILLIAM LEON DAWSON

WITHIN ITS own precinct any science has a right to define its own terms, or to discourse in a fashion understood only by its votaries.

But if a science is to become intelligible outside of its own realm, it must use, so far as it may, the language of common life; it must recognize and defer to values already assigned. Zoological science, it seems to me, recently trespassed in its attempted perversion of the word *visitant*, and has obscured rather than clarified the vision of its own field.

To be sure there was a real difficulty involved. Human society in its earlier evolution recognized only two relations, that of being at home, *residence*, or that of being temporarily away, whether to commune with friends, to transact a piece of business, or to satisfy curiosity, *visiting*. The visitor was always understood to have a home, an abiding place, to which he would be presently returning. But animals,—or, to be specific, let us say birds,—viewed in this aspect are of three sorts: those which remain always in one locality, the land of their birth, *residents*, in the strict sense; those which, having completed the duties of rearing a family, roam about, whether north or south or east or west, or up or down, visiting various places in turn or casually, being here today or gone tomorrow or next week, *visitors* in the accommodated sense in which an animal, not dependent upon friends nor seeking definite goals, may be said to visit. A third class, the class for which we seek definition, both resides and visits, having in fact two homes, or definite habitual ranges, and spending more or less time visiting on the way between them. This class has been called, not inappropriately, *summer resident* or *winter resident*, according to the particular local relation under consideration. Of late, however, there has been a great fad for calling this third class summer or winter “visitants”, thus confusing them hopelessly with the second class defined above, from which it is of the utmost importance to distinguish them. So defined the Tufted Puffin and the Western Tanager are “summer visitants” of the islands along the coast of Washington. But so also are the Knot and the Wandering Tattler and the Heermann Gull and the California Brown Pelican. Which of these breeds there? The words which might be eloquent if they were chosen with understanding and in conformity with common usage tell you nothing. You require to be told further that the Tufted Puffin breeds there, is, in fact, a summer resident. The Western Tanager also makes its home on these islands, becomes for the time, and in every sense susceptible of definition, a resident in summer. The Knot, while found in summer, is evidently away from home; he is on the way, whether north or south, a visitor, or better, a “migrant in summer”. The Heermann Gull,—what shall we say of him? Well, there is difficulty here in either case. He is away from home (his breeding place being in Mexico); hence he is not a “summer resident”, if that term connotes a breeding bird. But he is a summer resident if you understand by that that he has two homes, one of which is in the North. The California Brown Pelican, however, is strictly a summer visitor, in that he only occasionally appears, and then briefly, along the coast of Washington.

We shall have some difficulty, confessedly, in naming this third class; but we are not without help or guidance, and that in common current usage.

Being situated here at a watering place, we Santa Barbarans are perhaps in a position to realize clearly what recent zoonomers have evidently overlooked; viz., that this third class has arisen in human society, and that it has received its designation. Hereabouts we have two or three scores of families, each of which owns two homes, one in Santa Barbara, and the other in Chicago or New York or Boston, as the case may be. These spend habitually from three to six of the winter months with us, and we call them *winter residents*. Similarly a few families resident in Pasadena or Bakersfield, or Fresno, or elsewhere in the heated interior, maintain separate establishments on the coast, to which they resort for two or three months in summer, and we call such *summer residents*. Winter visitors we have also, of course, shoals of them, spending a week or two at the Potter, or a month with friends in Montecito,—here today and gone tomorrow; Santa Barbara this year and Ceylon the next.

It is a travesty on current usage to call the Gambel Sparrow, which spends five or six months with us, a “winter visitant”, and to place him thereby in the same category with the Pacific Fulmar and Baird Cormorant and Glaucous Gull, which are occasionally seen in winter; or with the Blue-fronted Jay, which pays us strict visits. And it is grossly inappropriate to call any breeding bird a “visitant” in its breeding home. Imperfect our human terms may be, but let us minimize their imperfection rather than parade our griefs and invite the scorn of those who speak a living language. The terms “summer resident” and “winter resident” are, in my opinion, much more accurate than the proposed substitutes, and they assuredly do conform to current usage.

Santa Barbara, California, January 8, 1914.

A CHANGE IN FAUNA

By FAYRE KENAGY

THE CHANGES in faunas so rapidly developing in certain regions in the west, have a peculiar interest for me. They take place with especial rapidity on irrigation projects, as the result of altered conditions, and desert surroundings are often completely changed in two or three years. The locality I have been especially interested in is the Minidoka project, in southern Idaho, containing about eighty thousand acres and bisected by the Snake River. This last feature makes it doubly interesting, as affording contrast between the changes in the uplands and those along the stream. As there is so great a difference between the two I will mention each separately.

I came to this region in 1907, before the water was turned into the canals, and have resided here permanently since. Thus I have had an excellent opportunity to note the changes which have taken place. The country was originally sandy, and heavily covered with sage-brush. There were fewer than fifteen summer residents, the river belt excluded, nearly all of them typical of a dry region. Sage Grouse, Sage Thrasher, Burrowing Owl, Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Dusky Horned Lark, and Sage Sparrow were by far the most common. As the farmers cleared their land, the Grouse, Sage Thrasher, and Sage Sparrow were deprived of their natural haunts. The Grouse became rare; the Sparrow and Thrasher are now found on the edges of the project, and on state land that has remained uncleared. But this is not the case